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THE FIELD OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE COLLEGE TOWN*

By C. B. JOECKEL, *Librarian, Berkeley (Calif.) Public Library*

The field of the public library in the college or university town does not differ in a general way from that of any public library, but there are some special problems. Let us define very briefly the respective fields of the university library and of the public library. The primary function of the university library is to serve the university community. It is primarily a reference library. The primary function of the public library is to serve the whole community. It is primarily a circulating library. The two institutions differ both in the public they are trying to serve and in their methods of serving that public.

There are two main groups of problems. One group is concerned with the question, How much shall the public library help the university or college library? You college library people may resent the inference that you need any help from the public library, but you cannot deny that the public library does help you in some ways, whether you need the help or not.

Probably the first problem which will confront the public library in the college town is this, How far shall we go in supplying copies of books asked for by college students, particularly books which are reserved at the college library? The wise student will rush to the public library for the book which is reserved at the university library. In meeting this problem we must recognize the fact that the student is for several years a member of the community and is therefore entitled to the privileges of the public library. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that it is the duty of the college library to meet the demand for such books as far as possible. I feel that the public library should purchase such books only when they can be useful to the general, as well as the university, public.

There are two corollaries to this problem of meeting the demand on the public library for books reserved at the college library. The first is, how to prevent the loss, either temporary or permanent, of such books. In going over the titles of books reported missing at our library here in Berkeley, I have been surprised at the number whose loss must be attributed to university students. Probably the only solution of the problem will be to put such books in a closed portion of the stack, or behind lock and key.

The other corollary to the reserve book problem is, Shall the public library adopt a system of reserving books in demand by college students, similar to the system of reserves in a college library? My opinion on this point is still in the formative state, but right now I should be inclined to decide against a reserve system for the public library, which, as I stated a little while ago, is primarily a circulating library. The problem of supplying enough copies of reserved books is the problem of the college library, just as the problem of supplying enough copies of current fiction is the problem of the public library.

Another way in which the public library helps out the university or college is by furnishing necessary books for collateral reading of university extension students. In some colleges and universities extension students are not granted library privileges except for reading and reference, and the public library should, I am sure, go as far as possible in meeting the demands of such students for books for home reading.

Now let us consider how much the public library in a college town should ask help of the college library. Take, for instance, the matter of interlibrary loans. How often should the public library ask the college library for books on interlibrary loan?

In a paper I wrote for a Section meeting

*Abstract.

of the California Library Association three or four years ago I said: "In general, it seems to me that interlibrary loans on the east side of the bay (meaning San Francisco Bay), and possibly all around the bay, are not necessary." I was speaking at that time from the university library point of view, but I think I can still subscribe to that statement.

Another interesting but perplexing problem confronting the public library is to try to determine how far to avoid the purchase of books because they happen to be in the college library. The standards of purchase of a public library in a town where there is a strong college or university library will vary considerably from those of a public library which stands alone in its community. There are a good many books, mostly scholarly and expensive, which the

public library in a college town would hardly be justified in buying as long as copies are accessible at the college library.

One more way in which the college can help the public library is in reference work. Of course, there will be many instances in which the college library, with its large collection, will be better equipped to answer reference questions than the smaller collection of the public library, but readers should be referred to the college library only when the public library has failed after careful effort to meet their needs, and when the questions they are looking up are of some real importance.

The guiding principle in solving these problems should take the middle ground of friendly co-operation rather than the extreme either of too much independence on the one hand, or of too much dependence on the other.

INSPIRATIONAL INFLUENCE OF BOOKS IN THE LIFE OF CHILDREN

BY MRS. EDNA LYMAN SCOTT, *Lecturer on Story-Telling, Seattle*

In the midst of problems and conflicting responsibilities it is not surprising that one often hears a sigh for the "Golden Age of Childhood"—for the time when there are no cares, when all is freedom, fun and frolic.

But as we look about us at the children of today, would any of us truly wish to be a modern child if he could? You gasp! Is not this the era of the child? Is it not the time, above all others, when the first consideration is for him, when his needs are met before he realizes them, when his desires have only to be expressed to find gratification? Is he not the center about which modern society moves? Are not laws made for him, moneys appropriated to be devoted to his service, lands set aside for his use? Are not the most scholarly studying him, the most alert observing him, the most carefully trained ministering to him? Has he not come to have even a commercial value to the state, so that he is protected and cared for as an

asset? Certainly all these conditions are true or partially true, but who would exchange his own childhood for that of a child of today?

Did we not have more leisure, did not imagination thrive better unobserved, were we not more resourceful, since the resources of adults were not ours to command? Would we change the companionship of the most interesting of mothers for that of any kindergartener, or the firm, even justice of the father who had learned his lessons of obedience before he exacted them, for the discipline of any school?

We jumped from the wood-pile because a ship was burning, and swung from the rafters of the barn because an invisible audience was ready to applaud the wonderful performance of the "World's Greatest Lady Gymnast." What would we have thought of directed play?"

Sometimes we made bold to venture to the public library—it was not nearly so enticing as a certain book-case at home